

10th LE:NOTRE Institute Landscape Forum 2021 in Gdańsk

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Linking Landscape Education, Research and Innovative Practice

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Alternative Futures for the Port Island in Gdańsk

Outcome Statement of the Landscape Forum Gdańsk 2021

April 19 and October 16, 2021

*"Landscape is.....an area, **as perceived by people**, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"*

Florence Convention, Council of Europe, 2000



The Port Island of today: Deepwater Container Terminal Gdańsk (DCT), infrastructure of a global economy, directly facing Natura 2000 area Zatoka Pucka protecting around 200 marine bird species, image: Andrzej Otrębski, wikimedia commons

The urban agglomeration of Gdańsk, like most successful European metropolitan areas, is growing, with the result that there are increasing tendencies for densification in existing built-up areas and high levels of development pressure on still open/unbuilt land resulting in threats to the remaining green areas, the relics of semi-natural landscape, and cultural heritage.

At the same time climate change is putting increasing pressures on urban areas in particular: the hottest years ever since records began have been in the last few years. Research shows that increasing density and the loss of vegetation will make a bad situation still worse. The landscape of Gdańsk is subject to water-related risks at three levels: by being situated in the Vistula floodplain, by being exposed to

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flash floods resulting from strong rain events on the moraine hills bordering the city to the south and by inevitable sea level rise of the Baltic Sea, expected for the coming century.

Open space and the urban landscape are essential assets of an attractive environment. This ensures the quality of life and well-being of the local population as well as being a key 'soft' locational factor for attracting inward investment and thus safeguarding jobs, something which is vital in the competition as processes of globalization and digitalization transform the economic landscape.

We find all relevant landscape conflicts in the coastal agglomeration of Gdańsk: landscape integrity versus landscape fragmentation, global maritime economy versus local economy, grey infrastructure versus green and blue infrastructure, urban sprawl versus density, gentrification versus inclusion, sea versus land, nature versus industry, past narratives versus today's realities.

This landscape is problematic, fascinating and unique. This is why we ask you to think about it.



Location and scope of the Gdańsk Port Island at the eastern edge of the Tricity Agglomeration, aerial view derived from World Imagery via ESRI ArcGIS online

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Key messages of the Gdańsk Landscape Forum 2021

Against this background, the 2021 LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum in Gdańsk has been considering the potentials of the Port Island's landscape resources. In order to move towards a sustainable future of the Port Island, we make the following recommendations:

- 1. Compose a collaborative landscape biography of the Port Island**
- 2. Define the role of Port Island for the urban agglomeration of Gdańsk**
- 3. Co-design a shared vision for the Port Island**
- 4. Create an inclusive governance system for the Port Island as a whole**
- 5. Protect the ecosystem of the Port Island and enhance related ecosystem services**
- 6. Design integrative, innovative and creative local solutions. Design together**
- 7. Promote food, health and well-being as integrative themes**
- 8. Celebrate the landscape of the Port Island together**



Coastal pine tree forest near Górkі Zachodnie at the eastern edge of the Port Island

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In the following, we explain each of our messages in relation to their landscape and policy context:

1 Compose a collaborative landscape biography of the Port Island

We only perceive what we know. Landscape biography is particularly useful in cases where, for the purpose of considering future landscape transformations, knowledge is needed about long-term landscape changes, about regional and local heritage, and about historical narratives of space and place. (Kolen et al, 2016). Landscape biography starts from a 'dwelling perspective' on the landscape (Ingold 2000, in Kolen, 2016). Therefore, an important field of interest is how local communities have, through time, expressed something of themselves, their ideas and their identities in the landscapes they occupied, used and reshaped, and how they (conversely) derived their identity and existence from the landscape as 'formative agent' (Kolen et al, 2016). The Port Island of today is a palimpsest of disrupted narratives. Economically-driven actors of change operate easily within this identity vacuum.

A landscape biography can show how and why the Port Island has transformed under the mutual influence of human activity and natural forces, and how the past influences the present, and may inspire future developments. It is vital that all formal stakeholders and local communities of different age groups are involved in this process. Create and communicate the Port Island's landscape biography in an inclusive way by making use of multiple methods and media. A landscape biography is a living document that constantly evolves over time. A long term process is needed.



First steps towards developing a bottom-up narrative of the Port Island started during the Learning Landscapes ERASMUS workshop on the Port Island in October 2021, as part of the Landscape Forum process.

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2 Define the role of Port Island for the urban agglomeration of Gdańsk

The Gdańsk urban development plan foresees two competing functions for the Port Island. While the western part is designated to provide space for the expected expansion of port-related activities and infrastructures, the eastern part is supposed to remain natural, offering recreational services to residents and visitors. However, this functional division is not congruent with today's territorial reality. A huge oil and gas storage and the pipeline leading to it are located in the middle of Stogi forest. The prospective port-related territories in Przeróbka are largely in a transition status: in many places, nature is reconquering undeveloped and derelict land. Large areas have not been developed at all yet and still remind us of their previous functions as open sewage plants, wetlands or pastures. This is a unique chance. At this moment, the transition status of the territory still bears the opportunity of making Port Island part of an integrated coastal green belt. The port development is certainly part of this.

It is vital that planners, politicians, stakeholders, civic organisations and citizens use this opportunity now before it will be too late.



A green belt system aims at creating connections and spatial qualities for people and nature aiming at improving local landscape resilience. This approach can be part of a sustainable development strategy of the port-related industries and commercial zones.

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3 Co-design a shared vision for Port Island. There can be more than one vision.

Landscape change on the Port Island is subject to the influence of many competing driving forces and diverse interests. Power structures divide not only across three municipalities, but also across local, regional and sectoral planning schemes and even include the Polish state as the main actor with regard to the port development. The voices of local civic communities are not coordinated and almost unheard. An integrated visioning process for the Port Island as a whole could be an effective starting point towards a more sustainable landscape development.

As an outcome, all interest groups on the Port Island may agree on an integrated vision that builds on their specific sectoral or place-specific views. A vision that combines the economic opportunities of a modern port landscape with a place for nature, dwelling, recreation, heritage and tourism. Combining all of these diverse identities in one limited territory is not what a vision can finally solve. However, it sets the main direction for a long-term shared design challenge and makes sure that all stakeholders work towards the same set of goals.



Students from Croatia, Slovakia and Poland engage with pupils from the local school in Przeróbka on the Port Island during the Learning Landscapes ERASMUS workshop in October 2021, as part of the Landscape Forum process

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4 Create an inclusive governance system for the Port Island as a whole

A sustainable future for the Port Island is highly dependent on the establishment of a governance structure covering the island as a whole. Such a structure could be established in order to implement the integrated vision mentioned in the previous message. This needs to emerge from and build on the existing and democratically legitimated decision-making systems. There are many good examples of purpose-related governance forms, for example for the establishment of peri-urban regional parks or local food systems. Such a model may consist of a **Port Island Landscape Council** with representatives of all sectors, a steering committee with members of the local authorities and other relevant elected units, and a project team. At the same time, local actors and initiatives have to be involved, connected and included in the implementation of the vision. Any resource and capacity can be activated in line with the shared vision. Together, all actors may agree on the rules of the game. It is vital that this process develops into a long-term partnership of trust, mutual empowerment and collaboration.



The Port Island Landscape Council can bring all landscape-related interest groups together. Within this framework, the shared vision can translate into a strategy and the implementation can be supported by pooling resources.

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5 Protect the Port Island's ecosystem and enhance ecosystem services

Coastal landscapes have been places of economic opportunity since people have started to settle and trade there thousands of years ago. They are sources of individual and community wealth, cultural cross-fertilization and prosperity. The identity of Gdańsk is inseparably connected to port-related activities and values, in particular trade and shipbuilding. There is a strong hope and political will to build on this identity as a pathway to the future. Port Island is supposed to become the place where this positive narrative can materialize.

Making this choice always creates a trade-off.

It implies losing other functions and values of this coastal landscape. It means in particular: less capacity for coastal and fluvial flood protection, less space for enhancing the unique coastal ecosystems and biodiversity hotspots, less recreational and touristic qualities and opportunities in direct vicinity to the city centre, less accessibility, less value of the Port Island as a residential area and overall more risks to human and environmental health and well-being.

It is vital that all stakeholders involved are aware of the full price of their actions, because there is always a **triple bottom line**: economic, social and environmental.



Examples of goods and services provided by coastal ecosystems

visual quoted from: de Knegt B. (2019) *Indicators of Ecosystem Services for Policy Makers in the Netherlands*. In: Schröter M., Bonn A., Klotz S., Seppelt R., Baessler C. (eds) *Atlas of Ecosystem Services*. Springer, Cham

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6 Design integrative, innovative and creative local solutions. Design together.

We may envision Port Island as a peri-urban coastal landscape park - including the port. For achieving this goal, we need creative design ideas. We need to overcome obstacles, to create access and to compromise competing interests. A modern port can become a fascinating and inspiring landscape experience, contributing to the identity building of Gdańsk. Such experience is only possible by inclusive accessibility.

At the moment, many important questions are still open. They might guide and inspire an integrative planning, design and participation process:

- How might we secure and validate the green and open areas of Port Island, in particular those in the center, and integrate them into the port development?
- How might we assure inclusive accessibility to and across Port Island? This needs to include accessibility across the areas designated to the port and its infrastructure, and along the shores of the sea, lakes and the river.
- How might we define and (re)design the edges between built areas and open spaces, so that they become places with spatial quality rather than being the neglected backside?
- How might we validate the water areas and riverbanks on Port Island as major elements of the city's green-blue infrastructure?
- How might we identify the Port Island's old and modern heritage? And whose heritage would this be?
- How might we design spaces for and with people? And spaces for nature?

7 Promote food, health and well-being as integrative themes

Landscape quality has a strong influence on people's physical and mental health. We envision a Port Island where people can lead a healthy life with natural forests, fresh air, no noise and clean water. The Port Island has the capacity to offer health-related activities and services also to other residents and visitors of the urban agglomeration. Looking one generation ahead, we can assume that many of the health-threatening emissions in and around the Port Island will have disappeared. Health-related activities in the landscape provide opportunities for the creation of jobs and green investments. Likewise, local food production and local food systems could become an integrative driver combining community building, improvement of physical health and enhancement of biodiversity.

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8 Let's celebrate the landscape of the Port Island together

Being in the landscape together can stimulate transformation. It helps understanding what we value and what we consider as a risk. It creates shared responsibility for our common good, which is the landscape. **There is always only one landscape.** Being together in the landscape can make us communicate across interests, sectors and political divides. It helps building new collaborations and a shared commitment to pool resources and to work towards a shared vision. **We highly recommend the implementation of a Port Island Landscape Festival in 2022.** The festival could be a mix of community walks across the island, small interventions, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation and co-design activities.

Ideally, this festival will become the kick-off for the integrated visioning process we suggest here.

And a basis for a long-term transformation of the Port Island.



During the forum activities in October 2021, students of the Learning Landscapes ERASMUS workshop prototyped how alternative futures for the Port Island might be communicated to locals and visitors. We imagine that these small-scale, site-specific interventions could become part of an integrated knowledge building and visioning process.

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The landscape context of Gdańsk and the Port Island

The urban agglomeration of Gdańsk has evolved at the interface of three landscape units: the northern edge of the glacial moraines, the floodplain of the Vistula river and the Baltic coastline. This unique composition creates magnificent landscape potentials. The landscape forum Gdańsk has intended to focus on all of these, exemplified by four different focus areas. Unfortunately, the pandemic situation of 2020 and 2021 has prevented us from elaborating on all of them. Our process finally focused on the Port Island of Gdańsk, which was also the topic of our international student competition.

Port Island, *Wyspa Stogi* or *Wyspa Portowa* in Polish, belongs to the Gdańsk Bay and is located right in the north of the City of Gdańsk. The name refers to the northern harbour that has emerged since the 1970s. The German toponym *Nehrung* means *spit* in English. This is a landform made of sand sediments and very typical of the Baltic Sea. The island includes two relevant heritage sites: the Westerplatte peninsula with the World War II memorial and the old fortress *Twierdza Wisłoujście*, which is today a Natura 2000 site protecting amongst others a significant bats population. The island is further known for remnants of WWII fortifications along the coastline. Less known heritage includes the vernacular houses of Stogi and Krakowiec-Górki, reminding of the former rural identity of the Port Island, and the industrial monument of the railway repair workshops in Przeróbka.

The island covers about 26.4 km² at a length of around 8 km. It faces the Baltic Sea to the north and is bordered on all other sides by arms of the Vistula, in the west and south by the so-called *Dead Vistula* (Martwą Wisłą) and in the east by the so-called *Bold Vistula* (Wisłą Śmiałą). The eastern border of the island was created around 1840 after a flood during which the river broke through the dunes. This area is also under Natura 2000 protection status. Various large lakes can be found on the island as well as coastal woodlands and dunes, especially in the eastern parts.

Port Island and in particular the area of Westerplatte used to be popular seaside resorts developing from the end of the 19th century when this form of recreation started to become popular. Stogi still has a famous beach, though much smaller today because of the harbour extension. It includes a large campsite, right next to the recently built deepwater port, forming an interesting coexistence of industry and recreation. Since 1926, a tramline has connected the island to the city centre, replacing a former steamboat line.

Much of the western part of the island served for a long time as a septic drain field for subsurface wastewater disposal. These areas are nowadays transforming into logistic centers, in response to the expanding port infrastructure to be found all around and on the island and accelerated by the opening of a tunnel belonging to the new Gdańsk bypass.

Administratively speaking, the island itself is part of three different districts of the City of Gdańsk: Stogi, Przeróbka and Krakowiec-Górki Zachodni. Another important district is Nowy Port, bordering the island to the north-west at the coastline.

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The island hosts very relevant economic infrastructure. It appeared on the island mostly after 1945, leading to major disruptions of the prewar landscape character.

The most important economic players are:

- Extensive oil storage of the LOTOS refinery in the eastern part,
- Port Północny, the Gdańsk North Harbour,
- Deepwater Container Terminal (DCT),
- Logistics centres,
- Freight station,
- Shipyards

Port Island is thus a typical example of the various land use demands competing for a limited territorial resource along the coast. Quite diverse aspects are coming together. So far, no overall vision for the future identity of the island has been elaborated and agreed upon.



Hidden heritage on the Port Island: On our interesting walk to the historical heritage site of Twierdza Wisłoujście, we passed also some more recent industrial heritage and learned a lot about the walkability of the island.

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Context of this document

This outcome statement summarizes the main findings of the 10th LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum 'Transforming Cityscapes with Art' organized in Gdańsk, Poland, from October 2020 - October 2021. The forum was organized by the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk in cooperation with the Gdańsk Urban Development Association (FRAG), the Gdańsk University of Technology (scientific partner) and the LE:NOTRE Institute.

The process started with an international student competition on the Port Island implemented from October 2020 to January 2021. The results of this competition, to which many interesting entries from all over the world have been received, can be reviewed here:

<https://forum.in-institute.org/lenotre-international-student-competition-2021>

The ideas presented here may support local and regional stakeholders in shaping more sustainable landscape development processes. The forum outcome statement may also inspire democratic landscape transformation in other metropolitan areas in Europe and beyond.

Relevant supranational policy documents and agreements supporting a sustainable future of the Port Island's landscape, all valid or in force in Poland, include the following:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (United Nations¹)
- New Urban Agenda (UN Habitat²)
- Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (United Nations³)
- European Landscape Convention or Florence Convention (Council of Europe⁴)
- EU Communication on Green Infrastructure (European Union⁵)
- EU Water Framework Directive (European Union⁶)
- EU Natura 200 Directive (European Union⁷)
- EU Floods Directive (European Union⁸)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (European Union⁹)
- The New Leipzig Charta: The transformative power of cities for the common good, adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020¹⁰

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals> (accessed 07.11.2021)

² <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda> (accessed 07.11.2021)

³ <https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf> (accessed 07.11.2021)

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape> (accessed 07.11.2021)

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0249&from=EN> (acc. 07.11.2021)

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html (accessed 07.11.2021)

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm (accessed 07.11.2021)

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/implement.htm (accessed 07.11.2021)

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en (accessed 07.11.2021)

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf

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Kolen, J. et al. (2016): *Landscape biography* in Brink, Bruns et al: *Research in Landscape Architecture: Methods and Methodology*, Routledge

Background of the Landscape Forum and the LE:NOTRE Institute

The LE:NOTRE institute has been established under the auspices of ECLAS, the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools, as an umbrella organisation for interdisciplinary collaboration between education, research and innovative practice in the landscape field. The goal of the LE:NOTRE Institute is to develop and strengthen the links between landscape education, research and innovative practice, in the public, private and not for profit sectors.

It aims to achieve this by furthering and facilitating communication, collaboration and cross-fertilisation of ideas on an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral basis, in order to promote the wider and deeper understanding of the cultural, environmental, social and economic role of the landscape for the benefit and well-being of society as a whole.

What makes the LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum different from other European landscape events is the focus on dialogue, debate and discourse. It provides a unique opportunity to interact creatively with colleagues from a range of landscape disciplines in informal workshop and field visit settings. The aim is to create stimulating environment to promote the generation of both new teaching ideas and projects, for research and for collaboration between theory and practice. T

To date, the forum has been organized ten times: Antalya (2012), Rome (2013), Sarajevo (2014), Bucharest (2015), Paphos/Cyprus (2016), Freising (2017), Gozo/Malta (2018), Zagreb (2019), Bratislava (2020), Gdańsk (2021). The 11th landscape forum will take place in Rimini (2022)

Landscape Forum Website: <http://www.forum.ln-institute.org>

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For feedback on this document, please contact: office@ln-institute.org

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